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Contact: Barry E. Piatt PHONE: 202-224-0577

## Opening Statement Senator Byron L. Dorgan Chairman, Democratic Policy Committee

"Have Bush Administration Reconstruction and Anti-Corruption Failures Undermined the U.S. Mission in Iraq?"

## Monday, May 12, 2008 406 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Today the Democratic Policy Committee is holding the fourteenth in a series of oversight hearings to examine contracting fraud, waste, and abuse in Iraq.

We will be hearing from two former Administration officials who travelled to Iraq with a noble purpose: to help Iraqi anti-corruption investigators in their efforts to crack down on fraud, waste, and abuse, as part of the State Department's Office of Accountability and Transparency.

These witnesses have approached the Committee with a very disturbing account. They have told us that the Bush Administration essentially blocked their efforts to help the Iraqi anti-corruption effort, and contributed to the culture of corruption.

The witnesses will describe their work with a very courageous Iraqi judge, who I had an opportunity to hear at a hearing in March.

Judge Radhi al Radhi was the head of the Commission of Public Integrity, which was



established by the Coalition Provisional Authority after the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

By all accounts, Judge Radhi was an Iraqi patriot. He had been imprisoned and tortured by Saddam Hussein's regime. When he became the head of the Commission of Public Integrity, Judge Radhi took his job very much to heart, because he knew that his country's future depended largely on the ability to establish an honest, transparent government.

When he testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee in March, Judge Radhi estimated that corruption had resulted in the loss of \$18 billion in government funds, and most of those funds had been U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Judge Radhi said that instead of supporting his efforts to fight corruption, the top levels of the Iraqi government had ultimately suppressed his investigations.

Some have described Judge Radhi as an Iraqi version of Elliott Ness, who became legendary for fighting organized crime in Chicago. Many will recall the movie "The Untouchables", which dramatized that story.

Sadly, it turned out that Judge Radhi was not untouchable. This is a picture of Judge Radhi's house after it was hit by rockets, fired in apparent retaliation for Judge Radhi's investigations.

Judge Radhi also testified that since the establishment of the Commission of Public Integrity, more than 31 employees have been assassinated as well as at least an additional 12 family members.



In a number of cases, Judge Radhi's staff and their relatives were kidnapped or detained and tortured prior to being killed. Judge Radhi himself was fired upon by snipers, but was able to escape.

One would have expected that our own government would have been doing everything it could to support Judge Radhi's anti-corruption efforts. But as we

will hear from our first two witnesses today, that was simply not the case. On the contrary, our own government contributed to the culture of corruption.

Judge Arthur Brennan served in Iraq in 2007 as the Director of the Department of State's Office of Accountability and Transparency. I should note that Judge Brennan is a Republican, and became Director of OAT after serving as a New Hampshire Superior Court judge for 15 years.

<u>James Mattil</u> served as the Chief of Staff at the Office of Accountability and Transparency in Iraq for two years. In that capacity, he served as an advisor to Judge Radhi in his efforts to investigate corruption in the government of Iraq.

Our third witness will discuss the manner in which U.S. efforts to build up the government of Iraq *should* have been carried out. **Major General William Nash** (ret.) has extensive experience in peacekeeping operations, both as a U.S. Army commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina and as a civilian administrator for the United Nations in Kosovo.

Let me close by saying that by law, the Democratic and Republican Policy Committees in the Senate, which were established in 1947, are authorized to hold hearings and obtain witness testimony. In the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, we made use of that authority to conduct a series of hearings on Iraq contracting abuses.

In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, there has been some increase in oversight on the issue of Iraq contracting abuses. However, the fact is that the scope of the abuses is so huge, and the standing Senate Committees have so many other pressing issues within their jurisdiction, that the issue of Iraq contracting abuses is still not getting the degree of oversight that it deserves.

I thank our witnesses for appearing today, and look forward to their testimony.